

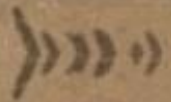
„What is something that you can not see, but recognize?“

„HELL POET“

by

Adam H. Valentine

NOTE: This short-story is part of a much larger work.



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„Thee Sa'leh Zende“

„The poet's Vessel becomes one with the Sand,
his Songs rides with the Gust,
as his devastating Howls travel the Land,
reducing all that hear them to Dust.“

- - - *Translated from an Excapy of an ancient Persian Poem.*

Imagine, the Saint Augustine Church of the Angels, a beautiful place of peace, bliss, and serenity, where unity reigned and where both man, woman and child alike, could find eternity together, in the presence of God, forever. The church used to be associated as a sort of sanctuary, where tranquil thought lived, and where one could always come, seeking to guide one's own sins away, until that fateful day, which left it the burned, dry husk that we see today; through which a cold and hollow wind would blow, every once in a while.

Its burned remains still stand tall at the same place where it once stood, at the top of the nearby cliffside, overlooking the sea as it once did; its once so beautiful exterior, now being chalk black, while its interior, even though still burned, stood strong, almost like a skeleton which refused to fall apart.

But what was it that led this once so peaceful sanctuary down from its Ivory Heights of Community and into the Ebony Abyss of Despair, leaving it broken on its knees in this permanent state of decay and grief?

Nobody knows; but there are various rumors and legends going around of what could have been the case, the most well-known one being the Legend of the Hell Poet.

It is said that, a long time ago, when the church walls were still young, as the warm waves of the sea around it parted into its cold melodies on the cliffside, there once was a priest, who would hold his sermons there.

The priest was a regular clergyman, he was celibate, well dressed and overall very polite; if one were to take a look at him, one would say that there was nothing remarkably noteworthy about him, except for two things. One being his uncanny ability to make his voice sound like it comes from anywhere, a talent through which he would entertain the children there, and two being his love for poetry, poetry through which he would express his deep love and admiration for God.

One day, after holding a regular sermon at his church, the priest would be visited by a woman who had come to see him; a woman of remarkable *beauty*, who spoke in a soft tone of voice and who possessed an allure to her over which any man could fall straight into, but above which a dim looking shadow lurked. She carried herself with a form of grace unlike any other that the priest had ever seen before in another woman, but inside of her there was a great burden of guilt which was slowly consuming her, along with a great deal of sadness, which she intended to leave behind as she approached the church's confessional booth.

Meeting the woman face to face, the priest was as stunned by her *beauty* as he was mesmerized by her allure. From this mesmerization, a great deal of attraction would spawn, attraction that was mostly based upon a strong passion and lust, which the priest had harbored for many years deep within him; all things that the priest knew were wrong, but still things the priest had tried to hide at the time of talking to her.



She introduced herself as a lady of faith and a higher ranking social order, along with being the wife of a local businessman that lived in that area. The woman's soft speech, like the rest of her, had a hint of gracefulness to it along with a slight seductive allure, which to him sounded like the most beautiful thing in the world; she had the voice of an angel, along with a way of pronouncing certain words in the softest way possible, which made the priest's heart knock, in ways that he never thought it could; was it love, was he in love with her, did he really have a choice, all the priest really knew at that moment was that he felt that.

Was it right, was it wrong, he did not know, he knew nothing, nothing except for the fear of losing her, of losing such a woman and the agony of losing the feelings that she brought with her to him, it was a fear that slowly began poking tiny needles into his brain.

Talking with the women, he learned a great deal about her guilt, most of it was connected to her bad upbringing and the choices that would arise from it. She had an abusive father as well as an uncaring brother who would regularly hit her, alongside an apathetic mother who would just sit there and not care. This led her to do nothing but make the wrong choices, choices that would cost her dearly in life, by meeting the wrong people, doing the wrong things and pretty much making every wrong decision that she could do in her young adult life; eventually, leading her to marrying her current husband, the famous „star“ of their hometown, only for her to later find out the dark *truth* about him. Her husband was in the public eye seen as an influence philanthropist and businessman, but behind the curtains of the stage where the public eye glared, he was an emotionally unstable and very violent man, who like her father, would regularly hit her and then force her to put on makeup and wear thick, unrevealing clothing to hide her bruises, bruises which she would later show the priest.

But the worst was yet to come, for the women revealed that she had developed an affair with another man who was one of her husband's assistants and that if word ever got out about the affair, both she and her lover's head would be delivered on a golden platter to her husband. Reason for why that was, was as she revealed that her husband had connections to local crime syndicates and mafias with which he had a long, deep-seated history of interests with, and to whom he owned and still owns a great deal of his current influence and appreciation to. Knowing this, both she and her lover became scared and broke off the affair because of it, but feeling guilty about what she had done, she came to the church, seeking *forgiveness* and redemption, but also because she feared for her life.

Feeling scared, guilty and wanting to know if what she had done was right or wrong, she begged the priest to *forgive* her and answer her, she begged him to help her, to protect her; she begged him to love her and take her away from her abusive husband. The priest, having heard her story up until this point and being in the state that he was in, told her that he wasn't going to let anything hurt her, he told her that she wasn't wrong, that she wasn't to blame for the bad choices that she had made, that it was all to blame on to her bad upbringing and abusive father, that she could come anytime to visit him at the church, whenever she liked and when she ever wanted to; he told her that she was *forgiven*, that he wasn't going to allow anything to hurt her, that he was going to be there for her whenever she needed him and that he was going to protect her from anything that was going to come over her; some even say that he told her that he loved her.

It is unknown what happened afterward after he had said those words to her and after the confession was over, but some say that she gave the priest a soft kiss on the cheek for his kind words before leaving. But what is known is that the priest did not see her again for a very long time, up until a certain point where she would come and visit him again, and again, and again, until eventually, she became a regular visitor of the church and him.

Spending their time together, after his sermons were finished, the priest would come to appreciate, know and love her much more deeply; he greatly enjoyed her presence and warm touch upon his cheek as she would come to greatly appreciate his selflessness and kindness, along with the way he would entertain her and the children of the church there; with his various puppet shows and plays which he would organize and the fun ways through which he would imitate and would make his voice sound like it came from anywhere. But nothing would bring them as much together as their shared love for poetry; some of which he would sing to her, with their favorite being the Poem of Archimedes Bowl, which went like the following:

*There once was a Man named Archimedes,
who lived in Ancient Greece,
together with his best Friend Physiphidiphilis.*

*Archimedes was but an ordinary Man,
except for a Gift and Curse.*

*One which made his Life a Blessing,
while the other made it much worse.*

*His Gift was his uncanny Ability to master any Skill and Art,
be it building a House or anything which went from Hand,
unknowingly and instantaneously,
without ever having to put any Thought or Effort into the Ground or Sand.*

*On the other Hand,
his Curse was that he would always fail at anything
in which he would put his Effort and Thought,
which provided him great Pain for the things he fought.*

*For every time he would try to pursue one of his Goals
Chasing after Glory, with all his Heart and its Flare,
he would come to find himself faced with the Enmity and Despair,
at the Realization of the Situation, of never being able to reach it, let alone teach it.*

*Seeing his Friend in the great Pain that he was in,
Physiphidiphilis told him to just let it go;
„Let go, old Mate! Let go of all the things that cause you such great Pain!“
to Archimedes would answer:
„Ohh the Shame, the Shame!“*

*„Truly, the greatest Pain in Life that a Man can feel,
is being forced to let go of the things that he wants,
until he squeals!“*

*But valuing the honest Intent of his Friend,
Archimedes choose to honor him, by following his Advice,
but this was just the beginning of Archimedes greatest Vice.*

*The Gift would set in, just like the Curse,
as always, Archimedes would reach his Goals,
unknowingly, making him feel worse.*

*Being happy for his Friend,
Physiphidiphilis would then ask Archimedes,
how he felt about having his Goals finally fulfilled,
not knowing how much Archimedes Heart was being milled,
being milled by his own Pride, which was big as a Mountain and equally so wide.*

Answering, Archimedes said:
„The greatest Shame in Life, that a Man can feel,
is being forced to let go of the things that he wants,
which hurts like a Wound that does not want to heal;
only for him to get them later on, when one doesn't desire them anymore,
which is enough to make a Man roar!“

Archimedes was still unhappy, because after all,
what use would him finally reaching his Goals bring him,
when the Reasons behind them fall,
fall and becoming forgotten in the Abyss of Memory, Time and Life,
Archimedes would wonder: „Was it really worth all of this Strife?“

Still desiring to rid his Friend of his great Pain and being a master of Pottery,
Physiphidiphilis decided to give his Friend a special Gift;
that Gift was a Bowl,
that was intended to save his Soul.

Wondering for what his Friend would give him this Gift for,
Archimedes asked him why.

Physiphidiphilis answered:
„Why? Why, because Friendship is our tie.“

He then explained:
„The smart Man writes, while the Fool remembers.
Because, if you don't know what your Goals are and that leaves you with a Scar,
then you should simply write them down on a Piece of Papyrus.“

*„When the Time comes again and you need to remember,
just know where you left that last Member,
of that particular Goal that you were pursuing,
on the Papyrus and your Heart that was brewing.“*

*„Which is why I gave you this Bowl,
So that it can be the Place where you can keep and store,
the Papyruses upon which you would write,
and a place where you can leave behind your Spite.“*

*Again, valuing his Friends honest Intent,
Archimedes went and followed his Advice,
he took the Bowl,
into which he would pore in his very Heart and Soul.*

*He did that both, as a Way of
achieving and letting go,
of both his Pride
and his Goals.*

*Unbeknownst to him though,
Physiphidiphilis would in secret read those very Goals,
that his Friend would write,
so that he could always check on him,
before the Dawn of new Daylight.*

*His friend's Goals would grow more and more ambitious,
going from Goals that were judicious,
becoming each and every Day more malicious,*

which made Physiphidiphilis suspicious.

*His friend's Goals went from simply wanting to work as a Merchant,
and have a Wife and Kids,
to desiring to conquer everything Bit for Bits,
of Land and Knowledge between East and West,
to desiring to rid the World of all its Pests.*

*This made Physiphidiphilis very concerned,
as his Friend, Archimedes, turned and earned,
but would never learn, as he continued to burn in his old Pride,
towards his usual Strides.*

*Asking him: „Why?“,
Archimedes would answer,
before given what sounded like a final Goodbye.*

He answered:

*„The greatest Torment in life that a Man can feel,
is being forced to let go of the things that he wants,
which could make a Man kneel.“*

*„Only to get them later on,
when one doesn't desire them anymore,
wondering for what it all was for!“*

*„Whilst being forced to endure the Feelings of Torment that come
when one is forced to witness,
how these very Desires crumble!“*

*„And leave nothing behind,
but ruins of Enmity and Despair,
not even a Flare,
of Happiness or Bliss, when one remembers!“*

*„For they become Symbols of one's own Struggles and Failures,
towards Hights that one couldn't achieve,
bringing only Pain and Grief, like in the Aftermath of a Reave;
because they don't matter anymore.“*

*„And when they are all gathered, all in front of one,
in the Bowl of one's own Mind,
one becomes blind with Rage and Pride,
and desires nothing more but to destroy them,
for the useless Stride that they give one!“*

*„One desires to engulf them in an endless Blaze,
that would shake the World from Above and Bellow to its Core!
Until one realizes that Desire is also a Dream,
a Dream that was never more.“*

*„Such is the Suffering of the unknown ambitious Man,
such as the suffering of your Best Friend and Mate,
such is the Suffering of Archimedes the Great.“*

*It said, that of pretty Late, that Physiphidiphilis, Archimedes Friend,
read, one more final time, what his Friend had wrote,
some still wonder if it is true what is being told,
but some say that Archimedes desired to one Day destroy the whole World.*

*With that ends the Tale of Archimedes the Great,
and his friend Physiphidiphilis, and their Life in Ancient Greece,
but some still wonder, where is his Bowl,
has his Wish come true, for which he would lose his Soul?*

But as the warm breeze of the mid-summer wind would come to a close, so would the carefree time that the priest and the women would share too.

Desiring more from her and she desiring more from him, both of them were faced with the reality, that neither one of them were ever meant to be together; he, do to his position as a clergyman and she, due to her being the wife of the local crime-kingpin. Both of them were left to go their separate ways, like two leaves which danced in the wind together, only to be forced to split, with one leaf being left to drown in a cold sea of sadness, while the other was left hanging to dry up on a bitter rock.

Being angry and unable to let her go, the priest struggled between his devotion to God and his feelings for the women. Left wondering about what he was going to do, the priest would spend his days in prayer and torment. Torment caused by his own thoughts of what her current husband or for that matter another man was doing to her right now, while he felt trapped at his own small corner of the world; being powerless to stop it, the priest simply began to curse and shame himself for letting such a woman go. He, eventually, started to consume even certain, unknown, substances to forget her.

The other clergyman, having caught up with the priests relationship with the women and his current, strange behavior, which was slowly being reflected upon his current sermons, they decided to confront him about it, but not with self-righteousness anger, but with kind brotherly love; they advised the priest of letting go of his current ways and to turn back to Christ.

The priest, being ashamed and regretful for what he did, accepted their offer for help and thanked them for what they did and for keeping this matter a secret between them. And for a time, the priest did regain his old peace back, but the lust which he had harbored for that woman, would create a fire within him which was slowly burning him down like an old house. Mostly with the images about that woman laying with another man; this torment began to even be reflected in the priests poetry, which went from praising God, to thanking God, to thanking God for meeting that woman, to thanking God for meeting her, to begging

Him to protect her, to talking more about her than God, to almost exclusively just talking about her and never mentioning God. This torment of his would slowly and surely continue, until . . . well

Some say that, during one particular day, when the sun wasn't as bright as it used to be, that the priest was visited by an unknown man, who came to visit him. The unknown man said to him that he came to visit him because he had unwillingly and unknowingly called for him there. The man's name and identity are unknown, but the burned up remains of a diary which was attributed to belonging to the priest held all of his poems along with a burned up list of names, of all the particular noteworthy individuals which the priest would come upon by and that would visit him there; the list identified the man as an Emissary of the Dark World.

It is said that after speaking to this man, that the priest made a choice, he decided that he was going to serve both the women and God, that he was going to save her, that it was his duty to save her as a man and a follower of God; he decided that he was going to sever the chains that were her husband and that he was going to set her free from his tyranny. He told himself that she was a princess, a divine maiden which needed the help of a brave knight, that her husband was an evil overlord that both oppressed her and the people of the land; he saw himself as a brave crusader to that overlord, whose duty it was to bring the Lord's Peace and *Justice* to the oppressed commoners, and free the divine maiden of her captivity and slumber. He said to himself that he loved her and that he was going to do anything necessary to be with her, forever; until the Lord does them apart.

This was the type of conviction and thought with which the priest approached the situation, which was even reflected in his poetry, he made up his mind that he was going to save that woman and for that he made a plan.

His plan was that he was going to fake his death by making the other clergymen and churchgoers believe that he had accidentally fallen off the nearby cliffside, then he was going to masquerade as one of the husband employees, upon which he would get close to the husband enough and kill him, afterward, both he and the women would then be together; forever.

The first part of his plan depended mostly upon the construction of a life-size dummy which looked a lot like him, the churchgoers foreknowledge of the priest's current mental health condition, the lie that he had developed a form seizure which would make him spontaneously faint and fall unconscious on the spot and his uncanny ability to make his voice sound like it comes from anywhere.

During a day, when the winds blow was particularly cold, the priest, being hidden out of sight, lured a few churchgoers attending mass towards the side of the cliff where his dummy stood. Thinking the dummy to be the priest, the churchgoers called out to him to attend the mass, but the priest, being the skilled ventriloquist that he was, made the people think that the dummy was him, by making it respond to their calls as he pressured them to come closer to the cliff. But just as they began to approach the dummy, the priest made it sound like it had a seizure and then he made it fall off the cliff, into the cold waters below, shocking and

scaring the adults and the children there, but also making them believe that he was dead himself.

Having faked his death through deception and trickery, and as Fate would have it, the priest learned that one of the husband's colleagues had died and that they were going to need a priest for counseling.

Beating one of his fellow colleague that was expected to go there over the head, all in the name of a greater good, the priest infiltrated the meeting by pretending to be his colleague in the clergy. Meeting the husband, he turned out to be everything that the public and the priest had seen of him; a clean-shaved, attractive, kind and wealthy businessman whom the people admired, but not the priest, because to him, that was all deception, a facade, just like the woman had told him.

The husband began to share stories with the priest, about his friend and how he had loved him like a brother and was now devastated that he was gone. The priest, with the various pictures and thoughts of what he could have done to the woman, stayed calm and collected, as he waited for his chance while sharing the staple priestly advice of guidance with the man. Their conversation would then divulge from serious to serenity and laughter even; the husband would then ask the priest about his belief in the immortality of the human soul and what he thought would happen after death, to which hesitantly at first, the priest would answer: „It all depends upon which things you hang on in this life.“

The husband did not quite understand what he had meant by that, but *trusting* his words, he would stand up from his position and move towards a bottle of whiskey, with which he would drown his sorrows. As he did that, he would begin to speak about his wife, the woman that the priest had fancied, which enraged the priest even more. He would talk about her love for wine and how she preferred it more than he did whiskey, how she wasn't in the house right now and off to one of her „meetings“, how she would spend most of their money upon expensive, but useless things which she wouldn't even use, how she once threatened him with a knife and how he saw all of this as symptoms of her being used and abused by her brother while she had a bad relationship her father; he even said that he sometimes wonders if she had killed them.

The priest, who at this point had to listen to every word he had said, took his chance and attacked the man, he attacked the husband, her husband and he preceded to strangle him with his rosary which he had carried with himself. Afterward, he spilled all of the husband's flammable alcohol and similar substances on the floor, and then he would leave the house before setting it on fire.

This to him was only a prelude to God's *Justice* which awaited the husband in Hell, after all, who was he to talk about things like abuse and murder, after what he had done to that woman, after what he was going to do; in the priests mind, her husband was evil, he was a witch and like a witch, he had to be burned on a stake.

At nightfall the priest, having returned to the women's side after learning the location of her meeting, was devastated about finding out the *truth* about her after arriving at her doorstep;

expecting to be welcomed by open arms and warm kisses, to his surprise, the priest found himself in a tragic Turn of Fate of Faustian proportions that were going to change everything.

He learned that he still wasn't going to be able to be together with her, with the reasons varying from her rejecting him for what he did, to him outright finding out that she was lying and cheating on him, leading to a broken heart and a devastating mental breakdown on his part.

It said that afterward, the priest had returned to the church that very same night, where he was welcomed by a group of clergymen who questioned his death as well as the disappearance of their fellow colleague whom the priest had beaten down with his own hands. It is unknown what happened afterward, but if witness testimony is to be believed, the former sanctuary of sanctity and peace had suddenly cut fire which would spread into a bleeding crimson blaze.

That night, the fires from Hell burned on Earth as sparks of it flew up into the sky like fireflies or even fallen angels that tried to reach their way back towards Heaven, while around them shadowy figures of various phantasms would dance as the flames inside of it burned.

What was left of the church the other day was the ashing pile of husk that we see today; the skeletal remains of what was once such a beautiful place of serenity and bliss, no more. No more could the church choir be heard, or the beautiful sound of children voices singing; no more could the rhythmic „Amen“ of the churchgoers be heard or the warm sound of their laughter. All that could be heard of it now were the empty sounds of the seagulls singing, along with the cold blows of the wind, which would make the sea move its waves.

But there still is the matter of one thing though; one common question that is usually asked after this story is over; whatever happened to that women?

There are many rumors going around, about what had happened to her after the incidence, ranging from her marrying again to her becoming a women of the monastery, but no matter which interpretation one chooses, there is one thing that stays the same in all of them; it is said that she, after some time had passed, began to hear this certain type of music, which sounded like it came from anywhere. Playing in her head, getting louder and more ominous by the day. But that was just the beginning of it, she also began to develop a strange form of forgetfulness do to the music, which slowly began to affect her each and every day as she slowly began to forget the important things of her life, like who she was, where she was, who her parents were and even her own name.

This lead to her *beauty* tarnishing, along with her mind, which was both slowly fading into nothingness, just like the church itself; eventually leading her to commit suicide, by jumping off the cliffside next to where the church stood. That is why there are still reports of some people who swear to God till this day that sometimes, on a misty day, they can see in the distance what appears to be the silhouette of a young woman jumping off the same cliffside where the church stood. That is why some of the town's elders warn others not set foot on those wicked grounds, where they say that the shadow of evil rains, but is it not like such warnings have ever stopped others from trying before.

It is said that the singing she heard from then on was not that of mental illness, but the priest, the priest who was singing to her from the depths of Hell.

[illegible]

CONTINUED IN THE FULL VERSION,
STRANGER ==>